

The Anza Trail By Train

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Juan Bautista de Anza
National Historic Trail

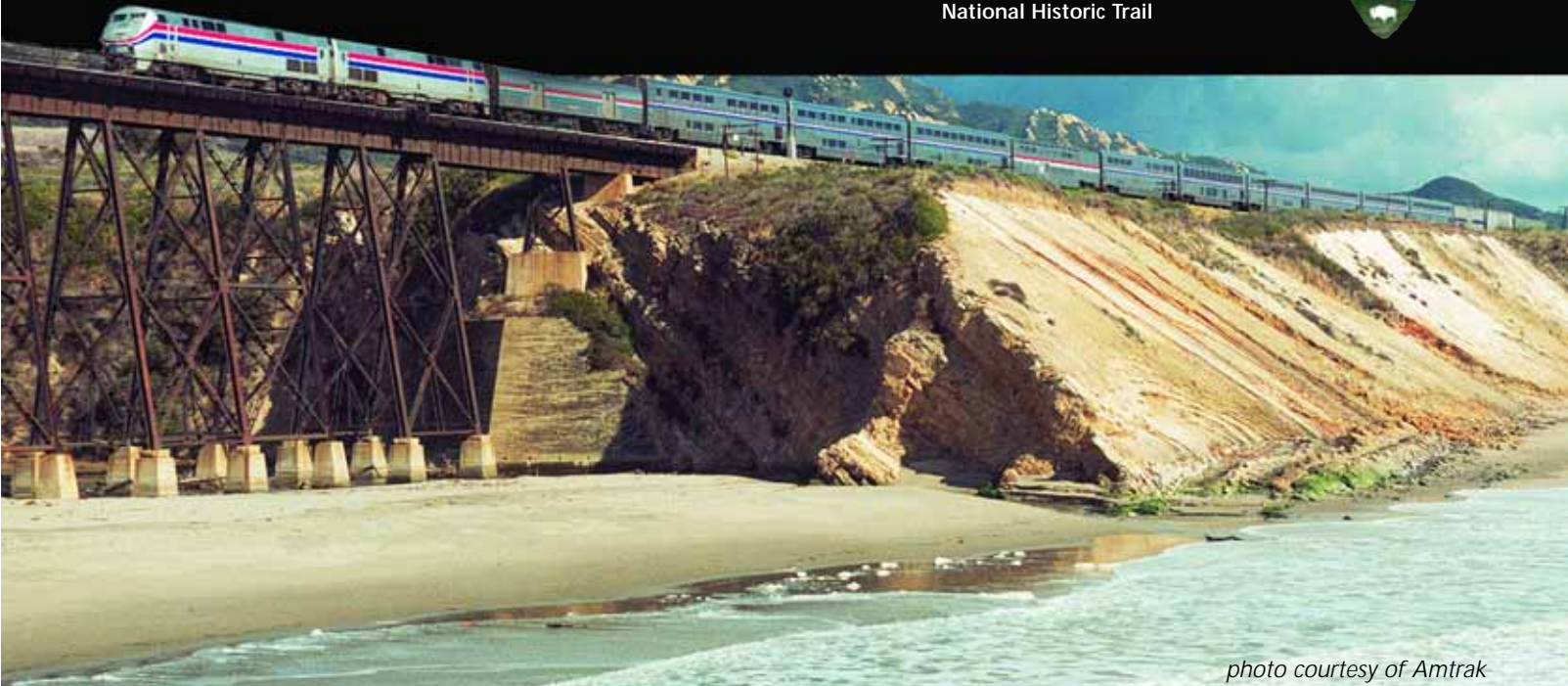
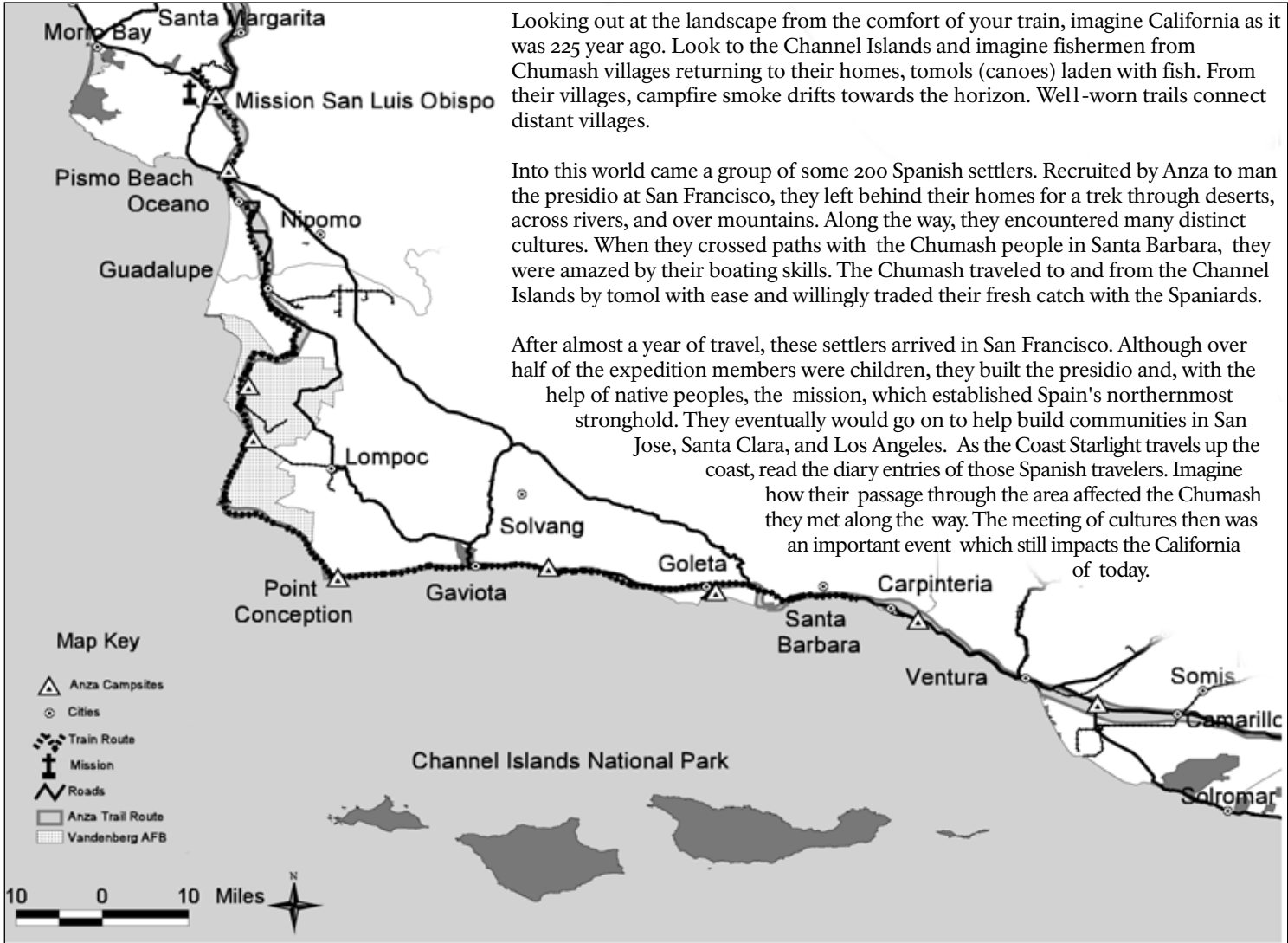


photo courtesy of Amtrak

Introduction

It is a 900 mile trip from the Mexican frontier outpost at Tubac to the San Francisco Bay. When the Spanish crown needed to establish its presence in California, Juan Bautista de Anza, a presidio commander from the frontier, was called upon to lead a group of settlers there in 1776. He brought together families from Sonora and Sinaloa, creating the first overland expedition including women and children in an effort to populate Alta (upper) California. They left Mexico and entered a world inhabited by native people with unfamiliar customs. Although Anza returned to Mexico, he left these settlers to build a new civilization. Today, as you travel up the California coast, you will see things that would be beyond the grasp of these travelers. Where Chumash villages and paths once dotted the landscape, now you see cities and roads along with the landscapes that have changed little from the time of those first inhabitants. Moving along the Gaviota Coast, you will see pristine live oak forests lining valleys and grass covered hillsides besides futuristic rocket launch pads within Vandenberg Air Force Base that can only be seen by train. Take a trip back in time and see California through the eyes of those first families on the Anza Trail.

History and Map



Carpinteria



Courtesy Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
A Chumash tomol

“Reaching the sea beach and village called La Carpinteria...so called because the first expedition saw (the Chumash) building launches there...The Indians are great fisherman and very ingenious. They make baskets of various shapes,...trays and boxes and things made of stone. Above all, they build launches which they navigate...through rough seas and with much boldness.” - 24 February, 1776 - from the diary of Padre Font, priest for the Anza Expedition

Those original travelers on the Anza expedition met new cultures almost every day of their trip. The indigenous peoples of the desert had diets of agave roots, chia seeds, and wild game, while the Indians along the shore enjoyed a rich diet from the sea. The fishing ability of the Chumash, who used hooks made from shell, and the craftsmanship of the plank canoes called tomols and their use on the sea, amazed the Spanish.

Santa Barbara



Courtesy National Park Service
View from the Channel Islands

From the camp, I saw various waterspouts thrown up by the whales which were swimming around here...much tar which the sea throws up is found on the shores, sticking to the stones and the dry little balls of fresh tar are also found. Perhaps there are springs which flow out into the sea. 26 February , 1776 - Father Pedro Font

The Chumash used asphaltum (tar), which seeps up from nearby formations, to caulk their tomols. Today, off shore rigs tap into that same ocean floor looking for oil. Leaving the Mission San Gabriel, the Anza expedition followed a route that would become known as El Camino Real, linking together California’s chain of Missions. At the time of the trip, Father Serra had built only four missions in California. The planned Mission in San Francisco would help establish Spain’s northern frontier.

Point Conception



Copyright (C) 2002 Kenneth Adelman, California Coastal Records Project

At Punta de la Concepcion ..all the land is thickly covered with flowers, and green with a variety of grasses, good pasturage, and fragrant and useful plants. - 28 February, 1776 - Father Pedro Font

The Anza expedition depended heavily on the cattle they brought as a food source. The California coastal grasslands helped those cattle flourish. In San Francisco, the cattle were the primary food source of the settlers until farms and orchards could be established. From the indigenous people along the route, expedition members quickly discovered native plants that could be used for food. The hillsides along the train path in the Gaviota Coast area, which are grazed today by cattle from local ranches, benefit from coastal fog and winter rains.

Point Conception

San Luis Obispo



Courtesy Mission San Luis Obispo
Mission San Luis Obispo

The fathers welcoming us with peals of bells...our arrival was a matter for very great and mutual joy. The mission ...is situated in a beautiful site...in which sleep, locked in, the converted girls whom they call nuns. They are under the care of the wife of a soldier...she teaches them to sew and to keep clean; and they already do so very nicely, as if they were little Spaniards. - 2 March, 1776 - Father Pedro Font

Font’s diary paints a picture of a time when the Spanish hoped to transform the Native American population into farmers. Although planned with good intentions, the missions proved deadly for most of the Indians. European diseases spread quickly through the native population, destroying entire communities. Cultures that had developed over thousands of years were dismissed as archaic and ignorant. All California tribes continually practice their culture, traditions and ceremonies that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Contact



Docents from the South Coast Railroad Museum provide onboard interpretive programs on the Coast Starlight. The museum, located near Santa Barbara in Goleta, explores the history, technology, and adventure of railroading and is open 1-4p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. For more information about the museum or volunteering, please contact (805) 964- 3540 or go to their website at <http://www.goletadepot.org> .The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail was created by Congress in 1990 to commemorate the epic journey of colonists from Mexico to San Francisco. The trail is administered by the National Park Service in cooperation with public and private partners. For information about the trail, contact the Anza Trail superintendent at 1111 Jackson, Oakland, California, 94607. Or call (510) 817-1438. (English); (510) 817-1323 (Spanish). You can visit the trail website at www.nps.gov/juba or at <http://anza.uoregon.edu>.